



Simplifying on-farm animal welfare assessment

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A word cloud visualization of terms related to dairy farming and animal welfare. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'Dairy' and 'Farmer' being the largest. Other prominent words include 'Danish', 'welfare', 'Animal', 'Welfare', 'Federation', 'Behaviour', 'Correlation', 'Time', 'Management-based', 'On-farm', 'production', 'Cow', 'Resource-based', 'Protocol', 'attitude', 'Qualitative', 'farms', 'dairy', 'Principles', 'collection', 'cattle', 'Simple', 'consuming', 'Assessment', 'Objective', 'Animal-based', 'Simplifying', 'Data', 'Principal', 'Measures', 'Criteria', 'Component', 'analysis', 'Quality', and 'Dairy'.

Simplifying on-farm animal welfare assessment

PhD Thesis

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2014

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Preface an

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Preface and acknowledgements

Even though some argue that science is trusted blindly, I still believe that knowledge enlightens, and that, together with common sense, it has the potential to induce change.

This PhD project, funded by the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, and carried out in the Department of Large Animal Sciences, has given me the opportunity to explore animal welfare and some of the dilemmas it raises – dilemmas I have encountered in my previous education and in my work as an official veterinarian conducting animal welfare control. In Denmark animal welfare is measured by the authorities as compliance with legislation. However, in my experience total compliance cannot always be equated with animal welfare. Different scientific protocols for animal welfare assessment have been developed, and most of the newly developed ones contain animal-based measures. Animal-based measures are believed to reflect the experience of the animals, and they are considered by many to be necessary in an animal welfare assessment. However, their inclusion renders the assessments time-consuming and less useful in practice. With this as my starting point, I have explored whether it is possible in any way to simplify on-farm animal welfare assessment while keeping focus on the animals.

The findings in this PhD thesis support the idea that on-farm animal welfare assessment using animal-based measures is practicable. My hope is that this finding will encourage implementation of such protocols, either by farmer organizations or as a part of official welfare assessment, as this could be beneficial for on-farm animal welfare.

I would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the farmers who willingly participated in this study as they provided the basis for this project. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the Danish Cattle Federation, and in particular Peter Stamp Enemark, for introducing me to their welfare assessment protocol and allowing me to use it in this project. I would also like to thank Marie Louise Hansen and Mette Hammershøj, who performed the Qualitative Behaviour Assessment on farm.

I sincerely wish to thank my supervisors. Professor Björn Forkman, I owe you thanks for your continuous support, constructive input, and reflections, which pushed me to reflect; and for always taking time to answer my questions and to help me on my way. Professor Peter Sandøe, I have found it a privilege to have you as a supervisor, and I am grateful for your wise guidance and inputs concerning this project as well as other aspects in life. Senior scientist Françoise Wemelsfelder, thank you for introducing me to Qualitative Behaviour Assessment, for allowing me to participate in the QBA workshop in the first days of my PhD employment, and for allowing me to use the method in my PhD.

Thanks also to my colleagues at the Department of Large Animal Sciences; you all contributed in making a working day enjoyable. A special thanks to my 'office mate' Iben – thank you for the conversation, encouragement, laughter, and for your reflections on the project and on life in general. I have really enjoyed sharing office with you. Also, thanks to my friends for their support, patience and encouragement.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their support and unconditional love.

Frederiksberg, November 2013
Sine Norlander Andreassen

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